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## Amer-I-Can graduates 1st class

*BY KATE BRENNAN  
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VIERA — About 130 students from three high schools and one middle school are the first in Brevard to graduate from Amer-I-Can, NFL Hall-of-Famer Jim Brown's anti-gang and anti-violence program.

The students' success in completing the Amer-I-Can program was celebrated this morning in a graduation ceremony at Viera High School, where Jim Brown and other state and local dignitaries applauded their efforts.

"We are here to honor you all. This is your day. Congratulations on all the work you have done," said Brown, who founded the program in 1988.

The Amer-I-Can program aims to motivate at-risk students to stay in school, improve their grades and stay out of trouble. It was introduced in Florida eight years ago, but fizzled out. Last August, Brown re-launched the program in Florida at 14 schools in three counties, including Brevard.

Between 30 and 40 students enrolled in the semester-long course last fall at each of the four participating Brevard Public Schools – Stone Middle and Palm Bay, Eau Gallie and Bayside highs. The program is touted as a success by school officials, elected officials, parents and students for improving students' grades, changing their attitudes, and curbing discipline issues both inside the classroom and out.

Before joining the program, Palm Bay High School student Dina Mohamed said she had low self-confidence and was unsure how to achieve success. But now, Mohamed said she is determined to do well in school and beyond. She said she raised her grade point average from a 1.5 last school year to a 3.4 at the end of first semester this year.

"It was critical in helping me set goals and replace my negative thoughts with positive ones," she said.

***Read more about this story in tomorrow's FLORIDA TODAY.***

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